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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2000 2006

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LA PAZ
Altmann

LA PAZ, Bolivia - Klaus Altmann, a former Nazi commander wanted for war crimes in France, was freed from a Bolivian jail Monday.

Last Thursday's Supreme Court ruling that freed him also rejected his extradition to Peru to face charges of illegal currency trafficking and other "fraud against the state."

The 58-year-old businessman said his health had deteriorated during eight months behind bars.

Altmann was jailed last March after being convicted of using false documents to enter Bolivia from Peru.

The court ruling was a setback for French authorities, who had hoped Altmann's extradition to Peru would make it easier to bring him to justice in France. Altmann is a naturalized Bolivian citizen.

A military tribunal had condemned him to death in absentia for the slayings of French resistance fighters during the Nazi occupation in World War II.

He is wanted in France under the name of Klaus Barbie, and has admitted heading a Nazi SS unit in that country.

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RNR154

ALTMANN:

LA PAZ, OCT 29, REUTER -- KLAUS ALTMANN, NATURALIZED BOLIVIAN BUSINESSMAN, WANTED IN FRANCE FOR WAR CRIMES UNDER THE NAME OF KLAUS BARBIE, WAS RELEASED TODAY AFTER NEARLY EIGHT MONTHS IN A BOLIVIAN JAIL.

ALTMANN HAD BEEN HELD SINCE LAST MARCH PENDING EXTRADITION REQUESTS AGAINST HIM BY THE FRENCH AND PERUVIAN GOVERNMENTS.

THE BOLIVIAN SUPREME COURT LAST WEDNESDAY FINALLY TURNED DOWN A PERUVIAN REQUEST FOR SENOR ALTMANN'S EXTRADITION AND ORDERED HIS IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

THE PERUVIAN REQUEST INVOLVED CHARGES OF ALLEGED CURRENCY FRAUD AND SMUGGLING, AGAINST ALTMANN, 58, AND REPORTEDLY INVOLVED LARGE SUMS OF MONEY.

BOLIVIA HAD ALREADY TURNED DOWN THE FRENCH REQUEST -- BASED ON BARBIE'S ACTIVITIES AS NAZI GESTAPO CHIEF IN LYONS DURING WORLD WAR TWO -- ON THE GROUNDS THAT NO EXTRADITION TREATY EXISTS BETWEEN FRANCE AND BOLIVIA

MORE GR/JL1818

RNR155

ALTMANN 2 LA PAZ

ALTMAN WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN ABSENTIA BY A FRENCH MILITARY COURT AFTER WORLD WAR TWO UNDER THE NAME OF KLAUS BARBIE. HE HAS BEEN A NATURALISED BOLIVIAN CITIZEN FOR 30 YEARS.

KNOWN IN FRANCE AS THE "BUTCHER OF LYONS," HE HAS SEVERAL TIMES ADMITTED IN NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS DURING HIS DETENTION THAT HE WAS BARBIE.

RETUTER GR/JL1819

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